

# Advocate

Official news magazine of the BC Federation of Retired Union Members (BC FORUM)

Vol. 27 No. 4, Winter 2024



## **Solidarity in the house of labour**

**JOHN HORGAN  
REMEMBERED**

## **United Way: Supports for seniors**

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WORKERS  
ON STRIKE**



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**THE ADVOCATE**

**In this edition**

We are pleased to present this last edition of The Advocate for 2024. As always, the end of the year is a time to celebrate, and a time to remember. In this edition, we celebrate the 61st BCFED convention, the gift of the United Way BC partnership with labour and services offered to support seniors in healthy aging, and the dream of co-op housing. We remember out friends John Horgan, and Miriam Olney. And finally, we recognize and affirm the struggle of Canadian postal workers walking the line for a better future. We hope you have a wonderful holiday and fabulous new year.

- From the president..... 3
- Remembering John Horgan..... 4
- Co-op housing: Living the dream..... 5
- From the Minister for Seniors ..... 7
- In memory of Miriam Olney ..... 7
- BCFED Convention 2024..... 8
- United Way BC..... 10
- Office of the Seniors Advocate..... 12
- Senior health and wellness workshops 14
- Renew your membership and sign up a friend today ..... 15
- CUPW fights for the future..... 16

We respectfully acknowledge that the BC FORUM office is located on unceded lands of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), səliłwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations.

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# A time to rest, before we get to work

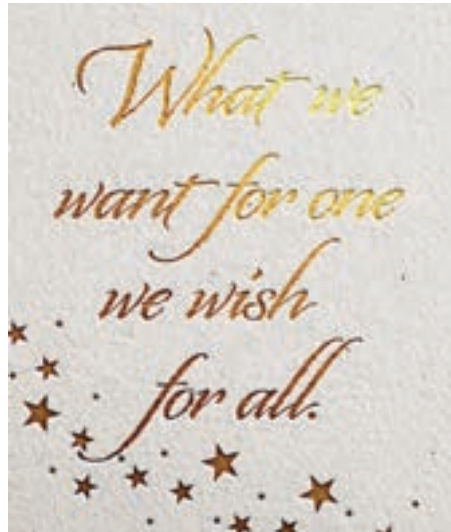
By Sam Wiese, BC FORUM President

The province of B.C. named October 9, 2024 as the first Ageism Awareness Day. Dan Levitt, Seniors Advocate of B.C., gave a news release which included the following quotes: “Often referred to as the last socially-acceptable form of prejudice, ageism is discriminating against someone based on their age. Older people are often the targets of inaccurate and negative stereotypes about ageing.”

“Ageism can impact an older person’s self-worth, independence, safety, mental and physical health, social life and even financial well-being...Ageism frames growing older as a state of decline, frailty or dependency, rather than one that celebrates experience, knowledge and continued potential.”

On October 28, 2024, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) hosted a discussion that explored the impacts of ageism on individuals and society. This was the sixth annual Simces & Rabkin Family Dialogue on Human Rights, organized by the CMHR, Zena Simces and Dr. Simon Rabkin, and Equitas — International Centre for Human Rights Education. I wasn’t able to attend the original airing of the presentation *Too Old, Too Young: A Conversation on Ageism and Human Rights*, during which panelists discussed how ageism, while often invisible or tolerated, has proven to have detrimental effects on the physical and mental health, safety and dignity of people both young and old. I am thankful that the full presentation is available on YouTube, and hope you’ll take the time to watch it. Simply search the YouTube.com site for: *Too old, too young: A conversation on ageism and human rights*.

On the topic of ageism, how can we not feel that is exactly what Trudeau was perpetrating with his proposed “Working Canadians Rebate”. I know



that many, if not all senior Canadians, were more than a bit miffed to find ourselves outside the purview of the \$250.00 rebate that was to provide some relief against burgeoning prices at the grocery checkout lines. I had written on behalf of BC FORUM calling Trudeau out on the fact that he was excluding the Canadian demographic that is amongst the poorest in our country, seniors. Then, on November 27, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh stood up in the House and expressed this very sentiment, causing a hold on the progress of these rebate payments. I know a hold on this rebate initiative will have a negative impact on hundreds of thousands, however, I would much rather see an inclusive, better thought out plan, than what smacks of a quick pre-election carrot for which the Liberals are famous.

Speaking of pre-election carrots, three word slogans and a newly birthed alignment to the principles of organized labour are dropping from Pollièvre’s corner just like the career politician he has always been. With his “Axe the Tax” and his statements that he fully understands and backs working families, Pollièvre somehow expects us to believe he is changing his spots, yet he stood in the house against a “GST holiday”, and

his record clearly shows he doesn’t vote in favour of workers’ rights.

2025 is going to be a year of questioning for Canadians, the most important being whether we are willing to accept another term of government from parties who have continuously failed working families, seniors, and those with disabilities or who are ill, or whether we will turn to the party of individuals who have shown time and again that they are there for us. Start by asking yourself which politicians you’ve seen or joined with in demonstrations and rallies to promote universal dental and pharmacare? What political party members will stand proudly on a picket line with locked out and striking workers? And, above all, which MPs are fervently introducing those private members’ bills which will protect and better the lives of Canadians? It is questions such as these that lead not only to supporting a government that will be and do good for us, but also one that will be reliable when held to task after being elected.

Today’s political landscape keeps me in mind of Plato: “Strange times are these in which we live when old and young are taught falsehoods in school. And the person that dares to tell the truth is called at once a lunatic and fool.” I hope that each of us will willingly discuss politics within our communities, that we brave being called a lunatic and encourage others to cast a ballot for the party that stands by campaign promises with committed actions.

It’s now time to set words aside and leave each and every one of you with best wishes, laughter, joy, love, and peace for these last portions of 2024 and into the new year. If you have celebrations over this next while I hope you are able to reach out in some way to those less fortunate than yourself to help fill their holiday season with light. Always remember “What we want for one we wish for all.”

# John Horgan: Remembering a leader

By Sam Wiese, BC FORUM President



In November the people of British Columbia, and the nation, lost an individual who was a friend, mentor, and leader, who lived with integrity and compassion, ever encapsulating fairness and equity for all. We were lucky to have had John Horgan as our Premier.

When first seeking support as leader of the NDP, his speedy response to my barrage of concerns and doubts provided both short and long-term proposals with tangible solutions. He won me over. He was a problem solver who brought people together. He was the man for which the use and principles of “we” far overshadowed “I”. Indeed, John was one of those rare humans that filled a room with his presence while leaving the space completely open for everyone else.

In their social media post of November 12th, the BC NDP eulogized:

“Fighting for people wasn’t something John did, it was who he was. As the MLA for Langford-Juan de Fuca, the leader of our party, and as Premier of B.C., John never wavered from his commitment to make life better for everyday British Columbians. He genuinely loved the people of our province, and connected with people from all walks of life. Above all, his work made a difference, and we in the BC NDP will ensure it continues.

Our thoughts are with Ellie, his family, and everyone who knew and loved John from Langford. May we carry forward his vision for a fairer, kinder British Columbia in his memory.”



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# Co-op housing: Living the dream

By Agnes Jackman, BC FORUM Director, HSA

Is the dream for a family of four to live comfortably in a well-situated home for \$1,600 a month in B.C.'s Lower Mainland possible? If it involves co-op housing, the answer is yes.

Only recently, the monthly payment for my daughter's family of four went up to \$1,600 for an unsubsidized co-op townhouse. Their home in Port Moody is one block away from the elementary school the kids attend. A hospital, recreational facilities, shopping, and restaurants are within easy walking distance. Also, when you look out their many windows, you might believe they live in the country, as the property abuts a wooded area. \$1,600 a month gives them 2,000 square feet, three bedrooms, one and a half bathrooms, a full kitchen, dining area, living room, family room, laundry room, and generous storage. There is a large deck accessed from the living room, a back yard, and a front door that opens to a lovely large shared open naturally landscaped area.

The award winning 60-unit complex was completed in the very early '80s and has a newly renovated social centre with a basketball court and a common laundry room with good-sized washers and dryers for big loads. Ample parking is provided. Property management is contracted out with a staffed office on site and a regular maintenance man available for the little stuff.

The co-op is jointly owned by the members. Co-op membership requires a one-time payment of \$2,500 and the property can only be sold if the co-op members vote for it to be, I am told.

This coming January will mark the one-year anniversary of my daughter's family living in their co-op. In this time, I have seen them blossom. The kids, five and eight years old, independently knock on their neighbours' doors, inviting their friends to come out and play. They have a shared tree house in the woods that is well used. Watching them all play together



Agnes' daughter's co-op; by kind permission.

reminds me of the freedom that I and my friends had in our childhood in an urban setting, something that I had almost given up hope I would ever see my grandchildren experience. It is the first time my daughter and her husband have felt secure in their housing and this has removed a huge worry and has allowed them to relax and enjoy their lives in a way that they were beginning to think wasn't possible. For me, being able to live in my own neighbourhood and have them live nearby, is an additional bonus.

Co-op housing isn't a new idea. The 1970s and '80s saw a healthy growth in the lower mainland that then significantly slowed down, despite growing demand. The housing market is now mainly controlled by for-profit developers and there is relatively little profit to be made in building co-op housing. Many of the co-ops that were built in the '70s and '80s were built on leased land. These leases now have come to term and are not being renewed, leaving thriving co-op communities suddenly with little chance of finding comparable housing. Some co-ops have chosen to buy the land and have worked with the Co-op Housing Federation of BC to do so.

Right now the waitlists for the co-ops are long. My daughter's family waited 3 years to get into their co-op and still consider themselves extremely lucky.

Co-op housing is a proven way to make possible the dream of many to have comfortable, secure, affordable housing. All that is needed are governments that have the appetite to create opportunities that will allow co-op housing to flourish and multiply. My personal dream is that co-op expansion will happen in the not-too-distant future.



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# From the federal Minister of Seniors

The following are from Minister Steven MacKinnon's November newsletter of pertinence to BC FORUM members. For complete and regular updates sign up at [Canada.ca](https://canada.ca) search: updates from the Minister of Seniors

**O**n July 19, 2024, the day after Seamus O'Regan stepped down from his position as Minister of Labour and Seniors, MP Steven MacKinnon was appointed to that position. MacKinnon was first elected as the Member of Parliament for Gatineau in 2015, and was re-elected in 2019 and 2021. He has previously served as Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Chief Government Whip, and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. He has also been a member of various committees, parliamentary associations, and inter-parliamentary groups. The following are excerpts from his first updates for seniors.



## Connecting Families Initiative

This is a program to provide more affordable internet services to families and individuals 65+. Those who qualify for the program may also be eligible for a low cost computer, while supplies last, so it may well be worth a few minutes of your time to check out the website, and if you don't have internet at home, remember

your local library and many community centres offer access.

To find out if you may qualify, visit: [ised-isde.canada.ca/site/connecting-families/en](https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/connecting-families/en).

## Responding to dementia's challenges through research partnerships

In the last two decades, the number of Canadians living with dementia more than doubled, and as our population ages, the number of new dementia cases is expected to continue increasing.

The Dementia Research and Innovation Funders Alliance fosters collaboration among people with lived experience of dementia, and funders and partners involved in dementia research and innovation. It enables them to speak with one voice to align their strategy for dementia research investment in Canada.

Collaborations like the Alliance are paving the way for a future where dementia can be better understood, prevented and, eventually, treated. To learn more about this, visit the national strategy on dementia.

## Travelling south? Travel smart!

Whether you're planning for a short or long trip, heading south takes preparation. Here is some pre-departure advice that will help you enjoy the sun while staying safe:

- Check the travel advice and advisories for your destination
- Protect yourself with travel insurance
- Register as a Canadian abroad

# In memory of Miriam Olney 1941-2024

By Diane Wood, BC FORUM Director, BCGEU

**M**iriam Olney was a long serving director on BC FORUM's Board of Directors representing UFCW 1518. She was active in the formation of BC FORUM and served continuously on the executive as secretary-treasurer from its formation, and then took up the position of secretary. Miriam was awarded a Life Membership for her long service to BC FORUM.

Miriam faced her dementia diagnosis with grace and courage, just as she

had always done in all aspects of her life. Miriam was a long time supporter of the Alzheimer Society of British Columbia. She and her family made extensive use of the Society's resources upon her dementia diagnosis. Miriam is remembered and described in many ways, but the common word used is generous, in that she gave so much of herself to so many. Her memory lives on by the many contributions she made to so many and the legacy she has left.

## BCFED Convention 2024

By Sam Wiese, BC FORUM President

This year marked the 61st convention of our BC Federation of Labour. Amongst vibrant debate, heartfelt stories and overall solidarity, convention delegates dealt with a wide range of resolutions impacting every sector.

Sussanne Skidmore and Hermender Singh Kailley were re-acclaimed to their respective positions of president and secretary treasurer. Ola Burgon was acclaimed to the position of trustee for four years with Jeane Andrews and Shane Polak elected as trustees for two years, and Shireen Clark elected as alternate trustee.

During the business of convention delegates were honoured to hear from Premier David Eby; CLC President Bea Bruske; Grand Chief Philip Stewart, who brought along his wife, newly re-elected Vancouver-Strathcona MLA Joan Stewart; Canada's NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh and Wisdom2Action Executive Director Fae Johnstone. The delegates heard from, and gave a moving and heartfelt thank you, to outgoing Minister of Labour Harry Baines.

The week wrapped up with BC FORUM President Sam Wiese addressing the delegation by saying, "Every union member in Canada who has retired, helped build this country!"



Top left to right: Premier David Eby; Alec Dan gives welcome from xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam) Nation; Grand Chief Dan George, MLA Joan Stewart, and Betty Valenzuela, HEU Financial Secretary; NDP Leader MP Jagmeet Singh greets delegates.

Centre left to right: Hon. Jennifer Whiteside and Karen Ranalletta, CUPE BC President; Jeane Andrews, IATSE; Fae Johnstone, Wisdom2Action.

Bottom left to right: Sussanne Skidmore and Hermender Kailley Singh celebrate; Sam Wiese, BC FORUM President; Bea Burke, CLC President; Harry Baines, Sussanne Skidmore and Hermender Kailley Singh.

All photos by Joshua Berson Photography and used by kind permission of Josh and the BCFED.





# HIGHLIGHTS



# United Way BC and labour: A perfect union

By Lori Mayhew, United Way BC Provincial Director, Labour Participation

Many people ask why there is a ‘labour participation department’ at the United Way. It is a direct result of a formalized agreement between the CLC and United Way Canada, which spells out the shared values between us.

There are also a list of principles to achieve these goals, and one of them is that a United Way that raises at least \$2.5 million annually is to have full-time labour staff positions with program funding.

Further to the national agreement, there is another agreement between the UWBC and CLC Pacific Region. This sets out how the partnership works in B.C. at a more granular level. Additionally, the UWBC board has five seats dedicated to labour.



Lori Mayhew, by kind permission.

The partnership is important to both the United Way and the labour movement, and we bring our shared values together to mobilize people to make the province a better place for working people.



Volunteer and fellow senior on the way to the clinic.

# Helping workers retire with United Way BC

By Gwenne Farrell BC FORUM 2nd Vice-President and Director, Move-Up

I was asked by United Way BC (UWBC) if I would facilitate a Saint Elizabeth Health (SEHC) event to be held the day before the UWBC Healthy Aging Conference. The Future of Aging Café – Breaking Down Age Barriers in the Workplace, was held November 4, 2024.

Initially, I was asked if I would facilitate a group discussion on ageism in the workplace, but I wanted to look at this from a different perspective. I wanted to lead a discussion on the barriers to retirement which keep people in the workplace longer than planned. With the affordability crisis, especially Metro Vancouver housing costs, people feel they cannot afford to retire. SEHC agreed that this would be a valuable discussion.

What are the most significant barriers (financial, logistical, health related concerns, and caregiving responsibilities) that older adults face when planning for retirement?

With that question in mind, we developed the following topics for our group discussions:

- How labour unions and employers can work together to support employees nearing retirement, including flexible work arrangements or phased retirement programs.
- How does ageism in the workplace contribute to delayed retirement, and what policies could be implemented to support older workers to transition out of full-time work?

- How can we better prepare today’s workforce for retirement to avoid the future pitfalls older adults are currently facing?

The participants attending this discussion ranged from young workers to seniors, with one participant still self-employed at 85 years old (though she acknowledged it was because she enjoyed working). Through the discussion it was recognized that employees are sometimes forced into retirement, as the employer may be seeking to lower their labour costs by removing higher paid employees.

Ultimately the consensus was employers and unions need to ensure that workers have the resources to be able to retire at the time of their choosing. They should not be forced to retire by the employer, nor should they feel forced to remain in the workforce because of economic barriers.

# United Way BC's Healthy Aging program

United Way BC's Healthy Aging portfolio manages grants and programs that provide exceptional quality-of-life benefits for seniors, helping them stay active, connected, and engaged. In 2023-24, United Way BC oversaw seven key community programs: Better at Home, Family & Friend Caregiver Supports, Social Prescribing, Therapeutic Activation Programs for Seniors (TAPS), Navigation and Peer Support, Digital Learning Program/Active Aging Plus, and Men's Sheds.

These seven programs are designed to support seniors in maintaining independence, improving well-being, and fostering meaningful community connections:



Digital program: Seniors learn new computer skills.



Gwenne Farrell, by kind permission.

- **Better at Home** assists seniors with daily tasks like housekeeping, grocery help, and transportation, while keeping them connected to their communities. Services are income-based and provided by local non-profits, with some available for free.
- **Therapeutic Activation Program for Seniors (TAPS)** offers group activities that engage seniors physically, mentally, and emotionally, promoting well-being and social interaction through exercises, workshops, and shared meals.
- **Family & Friend Caregiver Supports** provides resources, education, and support to unpaid caregivers of seniors with chronic or life-limiting conditions, helping them build skills and confidence in their caregiving roles.
- **Social Prescribing** connects seniors to non-medical services and community activities, reducing social isolation and boosting mental health by encouraging engagement in activities like exercise, art, and volunteering.
- **Navigation and Peer Support** helps seniors access government and community services with peer guidance, supporting them in tasks like form completion, financial aid, and housing services, so they can maintain independence.
- **Digital Learning/Active Aging Plus** empowers seniors with digital literacy, helping them navigate online services related to health, banking, and government, and fostering digital engagement in daily life.
- **Men's Sheds** offer older men a space to engage in activities, build community, and work on projects, combating isolation and enhancing mental health through social interaction and shared experiences.

United Way BC's Healthy Aging programs focus on health promotion, preventive practices, and senior-centered services that encourage independence, physical activity, social engagement, and a sense of belonging. United Way BC's program delivery may evolve, and shift based on community needs.

To learn more about Healthy Aging programming, please visit: [uwbc.ca/program/healthy-aging](http://uwbc.ca/program/healthy-aging)

## Volunteering at United Way

Seniors thrive when volunteers show up; Healthy Aging programs offer a range of meaningful opportunities for volunteers who want to make a positive difference.

Caring volunteers can vastly reduce isolation and loneliness while expanding a senior's connection to their community. Volunteers benefit, too! Healthy Aging program volunteers are more connected to their community, receive training, and experience increased well-being.

There are various roles for volunteers, ranging from social connections to practical support. Roles supporting seniors include:

- Friendly visiting
- Supporting social activities or community lunches for seniors
- Helping seniors to and from appointments
- Help with basic tasks like yard work, handyperson support around the home
- Helping with technology
- Providing caregiving mentorship

Please visit [iVolunteer.ca](http://iVolunteer.ca) to learn about volunteer opportunities in your community.

To find out about other United Way BC services and supports for seniors, or other United Way services and supports visit: [uwbc.ca/our-work](http://uwbc.ca/our-work).

# From the Office of the Seniors Advocate

The following are a few highlights from the Seniors Advocate, Dan Levitt. For full details search Seniors Advocate – Government of British Columbia – newsletters ([seniorsadvocatebc.ca](http://seniorsadvocatebc.ca))

**O**n October, the International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) our Seniors Advocate, Dan Levitt, released a statement which held the following: “Today, we recognize the countless ways seniors provide invaluable contributions to communities, as volunteers, elected officials, workers, mentors, friends, parents and grandparents on the International Day of Older Persons and National Seniors Day in Canada. People aged 65+ are the fastest-growing demographic group in B.C. By 2036, one in four British Columbians will be a senior. It is essential for everyone in B.C. to ensure the programs, supports and services required for healthy ageing are available when and where they are needed. B.C. seniors deserve to age in a manner of their choosing, in the communities they call home.”

## Statement to provincial government

On November 4th Dan Levitt released a statement to our newly re-elected provincial government to work with and for B.C. seniors. The initial portion of the statement reads:

“With the 2024 B.C. election coming to a close, I am again calling on the provincial government to develop and implement a cross-ministry seniors plan to help meet the needs of older adults in B.C.

We have known for decades that the seniors’ population is growing and more and more people will require government services. Unfortunately, we are not keeping pace with this growth.

B.C. seniors deserve to age with dignity, comfortably in their own homes in a manner of their choosing. Our new government will need to act



quickly to ensure that supports, services and programs are available to help older people when they need it most.

We need a concrete plan with targets and performance measures that define how government will meet the needs of the growing seniors’ population.”

## Mental health peer support for older adults

Are you a B.C. senior experiencing mental health challenges? Simon Fraser University is seeking participants for a new online peer support platform. Connect with others who can relate and support you in 60-minute virtual group sessions. For more information on the internet go to: [pmh-official.webflow.io/sos](http://pmh-official.webflow.io/sos)

## Old Age Security pension increase clarified

The Office of the Seniors Advocate has become aware of confusion regarding a large increase in federal government Old Age Security (OAS) pension payments. A federal political party recently moved to increase OAS payments for seniors over the age of

75 but was unsuccessful. If you see or hear conflicting information, call 1-800-277-9914 to speak to an Old Age Pension representative and confirm your monthly payment amount.

*(Sam’s note: this should not be confused with the Consumer Price Index quarterly review which resulted in a 1.3% increase of OAS payments for the period October to December 2024. Maximum OAS payments for individuals 65–74 are currently \$727.61/mo and for those 75 and older the maximum is \$800.44/mo) in a 1.3% increase of OAS payments for the period October to December 2024. Maximum OAS payments for individuals 65–74 are currently \$727.61/mo and for those 75 and older the maximum is \$800.44/mo.)*

## BC nurses and dental hygienists join forces to improve seniors’ oral health in long-term care (LTC)

The goal of the Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of BC and the BC Dental Hygienists’ Association is to see dental hygienists integrated to the permanent LTC staff alongside other allied health professionals. Nurses know that

access to proper oral care is essential for the overall health and well-being of residents in long-term care, however the nursing scope does not extend to comprehensive oral care. Appropriate oral care requires the expertise of oral health professionals such as dental hygienists.

In April 2022 a joint brief between Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of BC and the BC Dental Hygienists Association was published. The full brief is available on the internet here: [bcdha.com/publications/](http://bcdha.com/publications/)

Very brief synopsis of some significant recommendations:

- Prioritize oral care as essential care to promote oral health and prevent oral diseases.
- Ensure that long-term care residents, their families and staff have access to dental hygiene care, knowledge, and expertise by incor-

porating dental hygienists as a key part of interprofessional teams in long-term care settings.

- Engage dental hygienists in development resident oral health programs.
- Ensure all residents have equitable and appropriate access to basic oral care supplies such as toothbrushes and fluoride toothpastes as essential medicines without additional costs or barriers.

## Caregiving strategy survey

The Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence is gathering input from caregivers and care providers across the country to inform a proposed National Caregiving Strategy. The Strategy will focus on areas under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

While the online information gathering segment is complete, you

can still have input by contacting [info@canadiancaregiving.org](mailto:info@canadiancaregiving.org).

For more information about the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence and their work towards the development of a National Caregiving Strategy visit: [canadiancaregiving.org/national-caregiving-strategy/](http://canadiancaregiving.org/national-caregiving-strategy/)

## Preparing for winter

Finally, the Seniors Advocate, Province of B.C. and we at The Advocate encourage everyone to prepare for seasonal weather. Putting together and updating household emergency kits, properly equipping your vehicles, having personal plans as well as knowing community and provincial contingency plans makes all the difference in the ability to manage disruptions and calamities.

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## Senior health and wellness workshops

By Barb Mikulec

The Seniors Health and Wellness Institute gives free workshops throughout B.C. From Ageing in Place and Falls Prevention to Life Without Driving and Stay on the Road, offering 47 topics of interest to keeping seniors safe and aware of scams.

Workshops are facilitated by a group of senior volunteers who are continuously honing their skills to enable delivery of these 60 to 90 minute sessions both in person and via Zoom.

Where possible, we offer workshops for non-English speaking seniors. Many of our workshop materials are available in Chinese (simplified script), Japanese, Spanish and Punjabi.

The Seniors Health and Wellness Institute collaborates with UBC Faculty of Medicine Gerontology department



Barb Mikulec ©Barb Mikulec



Seniors' Health & Wellness Institute - COSCO

to review the healthy living workshops, ensuring the information is current. Recently the Institute was awarded the Senior Leadership Award from the SFU Gerontology Department for service to B.C. residents raising awareness of healthy lifestyle choices through their free workshops.

The Seniors Health and Wellness Institute has a long-standing affiliation with BC FORUM which we look forward to fostering further. Whether you wish to attend a workshop as an individual, or to arrange for a group presentation, you will find all you need at [www.seniorshelpingseniors.ca](http://www.seniorshelpingseniors.ca).

*Barb Mikulec is a retired teacher, member of BC FORUM, and one of the coordinating facilitators of the Seniors Health and Wellness Institute.*

### UNITED STEELWORKERS **SOAR** STEELWORKERS ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVE RETIREES

#### Who are we?

We are 10,000 strong, retired steelworkers and partners, organized in 34 local chapters across Canada.

#### What do we do?

We work collaboratively with other seniors' groups to improve our communities and engage in political and educational activities to enhance the well-being of our members.

#### Can you join?

Yes, if you can agree with and support the guiding principles and programs of SOAR. Annual dues are reasonable at \$12 for individual membership and \$15 for a couple.

#### Ready to join?

Contact District 3 SOAR Coordinator Brian Harder at 604-341-6382 or visit [usw.ca/soar](http://usw.ca/soar).



# Supporting BC FORUM has never been so important

Through our unions we saw the benefits of collective action. We know our voices are strongest when we stand in solidarity. That's where BC FORUM comes in. We are the only provincial organization that represents union members who have retired or are nearing retirement. We are an integral part of the labour movement, with formal representation in leadership bodies, and we maintain strong links with provincial and national seniors' groups. Here's how you can support and benefit from BC FORUM:

## Renew your membership

Look at the mailing label on this edition of the Advocate to check whether your membership is now due for renewal. If your membership is about to expire, you can renew by mailing the coupon below to BC FORUM, 110 - 4295 Canada Way, Burnaby, BC V5G 1H1; or renew online at [www.bcforum.ca](http://www.bcforum.ca).

## Encourage your friends to join!

Together, we can make a difference for ourselves and our families. Please encourage friends, colleagues and family members to join!

## Many unions cover first year dues

BC FORUM actively welcomes union members who are 50 and better, working or retired, and the list of unions that cover the first (and some up to three years!) membership for their qualified members keeps growing! If you're not yet a member, contact your union for details. Solidarity makes us strong!



## Extend the benefits of membership to your spouse

BC FORUM has always provided free \$2,500 Accidental Death and Dismemberment insurance coverage to members.

We are proud to extend this coverage to members' spouses at the low cost of \$5 per year. All you have to do is check the appropriate box when you apply or renew your membership. BC FORUM's AD&D coverage is valid until you reach age 86, the maximum age we were able to negotiate.



Your expiry date is on the mailing label. BCGEU, BCFMW, HSA, MoveUp, CEU, CUPE Locals 386, 402 and 7000; UFCW 1518, Heat and Frost, and LiUNA 1611 pay first year dues for qualified members.



B.C. Federation of Retired Union Members • #110- 4259 Canada Way, Burnaby, BC V5G 1H1  
604 688-4565 • 1 800 896-5678 • Fax: 604 430-5917 • [bcforum@bcfed.ca](http://bcforum@bcfed.ca) • [www.bcforum.ca](http://www.bcforum.ca)

Membership:  Application  Renewal  New address

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
LAST FIRST INITIAL

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET ADDRESS CITY POSTAL CODE

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Union: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth:\* \_\_\_\_\_  
DAY MONTH YEAR

Spouse's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's birth date:\* \_\_\_\_\_  
DAY MONTH YEAR

Single membership:	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20 - 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/> \$49 - 3 years
With AD&D for spouse:	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25 - 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/> \$64 - 3 years
<input type="checkbox"/> Cheque	<input type="checkbox"/> Visa	<input type="checkbox"/> MC Expiry  __  /  __    CVV*  __   __   __
Card number:	__   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   __   __	

.....  
SIGNATURE

Date of application: \_\_\_\_\_  
DAY MONTH YEAR

\* Required for Accidental Death & Dismemberment group insurance coverage to age 86.  
 \* Credit card companies now require the CVV for payment to be processed.

# CUPW members fight for the future

By Marion Pollack, BC FORUM Director, CUPW

*Things are moving quickly in the CUPW strike against Canada Post. Some of the issues may be resolved or worsened after this article has gone to press. What remains unchanged is CUPW members' determination to achieve a new deal that resolves real problems, addresses health and safety issues, protects the defined benefit pension, and improves and expands postal service.*

CUPW members are on strike to protect pensions, their futures, and Canada Post

On November 15, 2024 the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) members from coast to coast went on strike. Members walked out after CUPW and Canada Post had been bargaining for over a year to reach new collective agreements for both the Urban Operations and Rural and Suburban bargaining units. What are these workers fighting for?

- Improvements to health & safety provisions.
- Fair wages.
- An end to a new system of delivery that is hurting letter carriers.
- Expanded postal services including senior check-ins and postal banking.

After a year at the bargaining table Canada Post was still not prepared to withdraw its rollback demand that all new hires be put into a different, less secure pension plan, instead of the current defined benefit pension plan, even though Canada Post has benefited from the robust financial health of the current plan.

Canada Post called its workers heroes after CUPW members processed and delivered parcels and letters throughout the pandemic. Now they are treating them as villains.

When CUPW gave 72 hour strike notice, Canada Post responded in a way that can only be called cruel and mean-hearted. Canada Post informed CUPW members they were cutting off their access to the extended health plan.



Photo by Joshua Berson Photography; used with kind permission of Josh and the BCFED

Needed medications would not be covered nor essential services such as physiotherapy and midwifery. Even worse, Canada Post has refused to pay anyone who is off work on short term disability. Workers struggling with debilitating illnesses are not receiving disability pay. This has caused hardship and massively increased stress levels for these ill and injured postal workers.

The spirit on the picket lines has been amazing. Strikers have endured bomb cyclones, snow, freezing conditions,

and endless rain. CUPW members have responded to the strike call with energy, creativity, and positive spirits.

The support CUPW members have received has been wonderful. There are constant supportive honks, and many other unions and progressive organizations have come to show support. CUPW retired members have also been fixture on the picket lines.

This strike is important because:

1. It is about protecting our public postal service. CUPW wants a vibrant viable postal service. One important way to do this is to treat workers fairly.
2. It is about expanding the services and revenue of Canada Post. Postal administrations around the world have found postal banking very lucrative. A senior check in service to look in on vulnerable seniors has proven a success in other countries.
3. It is about protecting defined benefit pensions, the most secure type of pensions. Postal workers and other retirees deserve to live in dignity.
4. An injury to one is an injury to all.

CUPW is committed to ensuring fairness and justice for postal workers, and to ensure a bright future for the postal service.

## New address? New e-mail address?

Please send your new address and e-mail address to BC FORUM. You can mail in the form on page 15, or you can reach us by telephone at 1.800.896.5678 (toll free) or 604.688.4565; or by email at [bcforum@bcfed.ca](mailto:bcforum@bcfed.ca).



**Please check the expiry date on your label. Is your membership due for renewal?**